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THE Church of England

The Sole Encourager of
FREE-THINKING.

OR, AN
ESSAY,

To prove

That the CHURCH of ENGLAND
has this Mark of a *true Church*, that she
allows and encourages every particular
Member in her Communion, to examine
and try her *Doctrine and Discipline*; and to
compare them with *Scripture*, and the
Pattern of the Primitive Church; and that
this Liberty is not allow'd by any other
Churches or Sects in the World, which set
up for her *Rivals and Adversaries*.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good, 1 Thes. v. 21.

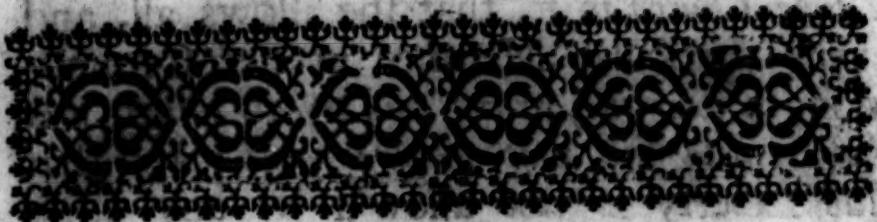
NOTTINGHAM:

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THE
Church of England
The Sole Proportioner of
THE TITHING
OR
YASSE

The image shows a circular, embossed seal or stamp in the middle of the page. The text within the seal is very faint and difficult to read, appearing as a dark, textured oval against the light background of the paper.

ΜΑΝΙΩΝ ΙΤΤΟΙ
πι μεταράξει τον Αριάνωναν τη δεκατίη
πι διασχετά και ; διεγένετο επί την 33
το Καθεδρικόν Ν.Τ. ; περιήλαβεν την
λαζαρία την οποίαν παρατημένη στην



THE
Church of England
 The Sole Encourager of
Free-Thinking, &c.

ST. Basil advises, that Christians should try the Things spoken by their Teachers, and receive those Doctrines which are agreeable to, and reject those which are alien from the Scriptures; because, says he, St. Paul hath said, Try all things; hold fast that which is good.

My Design in this *Essay*, is not to enquire into, examine and try the several Doctrines and Opinions, that are taught or embrac'd by the several *Parties and Sects*, that divide the *Christian World*; for that would be both an endless, and in some respects, an unprofitable Task. But, what I intend is, to shew,

that the Church of England has this mark of a true Church in it, that she allows all, and every particular Member in her Communion, to examine, prove and try all things, and then to hold fast that which is good; and that this Liberty is not allow'd by any other Church or Sect in the World, which set up for Her Rivals and Adversaries.

The reason of my undertaking to treat upon this Subject is, because that the Atheists, Deists, Libertines and Free-thinkers, such as Hobbs, Lock, Spinoza, Milton, Toland, Tindal, and the like, do frequently in their Conversations and Books, caution the People, to beware of being blinded by the Church or Clergy; they call upon them, to judge and believe and reason for themselves, to shake off the Tyranny of Creeds and Articles, and throw off the Yokes, that Synods and Councils have put upon their Understandings.

Now, in order to oppose the wicked Design of these Adversaries of Religion, I will endeavour to prove what I before asserted, that the Church of England allows and encourages every particular Member in her Communion to examine, prove and try all things, and then hold fast that which is good; Which is one mark of a true Church, which no other Churches or Sects in the World, which set up for her Adversaries, can pretend to.

And

And I doubt not, but in treating upon this Subject, I shall be able to give so many, and undeniable Instances of the Indulgence of our Church in this Affair, as will convince, (but perhaps not reform) those, who make the want of this Liberty, a pretence of their irreconcileable aversion to it.

1st, Then, the Education of our Youth, is for the most part entrusted with our Clergy; so that here the Foundation is laid for the freedom of trying and examining all things. It is very true, that pursuant to the *Baptismal vow*, our Children are taught the Principles of the Christian Religion, and so trained by degrees to the Doctrines of the Church. And this is most reasonable: Every Master teaches that to another, which himself believes is the Truth; if he did not, he would be a Deceiver, and betray his trust. But then our Youth are brought up to all those Arts and Sciences, which serve to clear their Minds from Prejudices, to establish in them the true Method of *fair Reasoning*, and all the nice Arts of discerning between *Truth and Falseness*: Nothing is neglected, that may make them, (when they come to the use of their Reason) free in their Enquiries, and impartial in their Sentiments. Grammar and Logick, Languages and Mathematicks, and every Art, that improves the Powers of Nature to think and discern aright, are taught in

Great Britain; and understood by our *Clergy*, in as much Perfection, as in any the Politest Parts of *Europe*. This Order has afforded us Eminent Professors in all those Arts; and Authors that have contributed as much as any of the most admired *Foreigners*, to their Advance-ment and Improvement.

In our *Universities*, not only all those Principles of Reason and Nature, that support Religion, but even the Fundamentals of our Faith, are publickly exposed to Question, freely debated, and argued against every day, as if they had never been tryed or discussed before: so that in the Article of *Education*, nothing is wanting on the part of our *Clergy*, to train up every Person in the best way imaginable, for the pursuit and attainment of Truth.

2dly, The *holy Scriptures*, which are the Rule of our Faith in Matters of Religion, are freely communicated to our *Laity* in their own Mother-Tongue; so freely, that there is nothing which our *Clergy* do so much recommend, as the serious study and frequent perusal of 'em: These *holy Scriptures* are also communicated in such order, and with so condescending a regard to weak Memories, that the meanest may not be depriv'd the benefit of them. Some part of these is read every day in the Service of the *Church* to our People; and a Portion of them made the constant Subject of all that mighty Labour of

of Preaching, which is amongst us. It would be endless to enumerate the many *Volumes* that have been written, to explain these *Oracles of God*, to make them intelligible to the lowest Capacities, and prove them to be of divine Authority, against the Objections and Cavils of the most subtle and learned *Heresicks*. So that nothing has been neglected by our *Church*, to set before every Member of it, and to explain to him, that *Rule*, which is to be the measure of his *Faith* and *Knowledge* in matters of Religion.

3dly, The *Writings of the Primitive Fathers*, the *Councils*, *Church-Records*, and *Historians*, make up that Pattern which sets before us the true Image of the first *Pure, Christian, Apostolical Church*, before it was corrupted with *Errors and Heresies*: By which we may see when our own *Church* is like it; when Spotless and Beautiful, and when it degenerates and varies from the Original.

And here the Industry of our *Clergy* is never enough to be commended, who have taken all imaginable care, to preserve these *Evidences*, to compare and reconcile them; to vindicate them against the Exceptions of captious and sceptical *Writers*, and to put the most useful Parts of them into *English*, for the benefit of the meanest Readers. So that nothing is wanting on our Parts, to let every Member of our *Church* see, what his Pattern is, what the

pure

pure Primitive Church was, whereby they may freely compare it with their own.

4thly, All the *Doctrines, Articles, Canons, and Discipline* of our Church, in short, all things that are required as *Terms of Communion*, are fully and freely communicated and publish'd : Nothing is kept in reserve : But every the meanest Member sees, and reads, and may consider, what he is to Believe, to Acknowledge, and to Practice, in order to join himself to the *Church of England*. He has all and every part of the Terms opened and explained to him ; so that he cannot easily mistake them. The *reasonableness* of every Article, the *Conformity* between the *Doctrines and the Scriptures*, between the *Discipline of Ours* and the *Primitive Church*, so fully made out, that no Member of our Church takes any thing implicitly, or upon trust, but becomes a Member of the *Church of England*, with his Eyes broad open, and knows exactly, what is requir'd of him, when he makes his choice.

But 5thly, As every Member of our Church may exercise his Judgment impartially, in examining the *Terms of Communion* which our Church enjoyns ; so she takes care to let them know, what she rejects and refuses at the same time. Whatever either the *Deist, Socinian, Papist, Presbyterian, or any other Church, or Congregation* can say for themselves,

selves, is freely told and publish'd in *England*. Our *Clergy* not onely permit, but enquire and search for, and communicate the several Accounts, relating to the *Faith* and *State of Foreign Churches*. They are freely heard amongst us, and the best of their *Books* are translated into our *Mother-Tongue*: The *Clergy* all the while encouraging this sort of *Learning*, by disputing publickly with them, and thereby urging them to disclose their *Principles*, the *Secrets of their Church*, and the *Arguments* by which they defend it. So that every Member of our *Church* has ample *Liberty* and *Opportunity* to know, not onely his *own Church*, and her *Doctrines* and *Discipline*, but the *Doctrines* and *Discipline* of all other *Churches* in the *World*; whereby he may compare them together freely, and see the difference between them.

The freedom of *Controversy*, was never greater than in the *Church of England*: The *Press* is open; *Conversation* almost unlimited; and every one *Speaks*, *Writes*, and *Prints* his *Sentiments*, without disturbance.

If a thorough *Examination*, a vigorous *Opposition*, and the most severe *Trial*, that ever any *Church* underwent, from all Ranks and Orders of Men, are enough to establish the *Church of England*, she must be immoveable. Not an *Article*, not a *Ceremony*, but has been question'd, debated, and largely and learned-

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ly defended by her *Clergy*; and at one time or other, her whole *Constitution*, *Doctrine* and *Discipline* have pass'd the utmost *Enquiries*, and stood the last shock of *Dispute*. It is indeed to be lamented, that we have such a *Licentiousness* of the *Press*, and such *Excesses* of *Wrangle*; when Men will be *Witty*, instead of being *learned* upon *Religion*; when they *Rail*, or *Cant*, or *Cavil*, instead of proposing a reasonable *Doubt* or *Objection*; when they persist and squabble for the last Word, or when they onely dispute over the already answer'd and condemn'd *Notions* of the *Heretics* and *Gainsayers* of *Antiquity*: In these Cases, the *Church* does complain, and very justly calls this, *Liberty abased*, and wou'd interpose and exert her *Authority*. For she has an *Authority*, (tho' not an *Authority* to erect an *Inquisition*) and yet some are apt to distinguish even the lowest degree of *Authority* by that Name. However, we may challenge the *Adversaries* of our *Church* to shew us any one considerable *Author* of any *Sect* or *Religion* whatever, who has by any the least pretence to *Reason*; attack'd any the smallest *Article* or *Ceremony* of our *Church*, but our *Clergy* have fully answer'd all those *Objections*, and have condescended to take Notice even of *Enthusiasts*, *Railers*, *Canters*, and such *despicable Writers*, as might justly have been neglected; were not the Weak to be humour'd,

mour'd, and even the Post to be answer'd, lest he should be wise in his own conceit. "It must therefore be acknowledg'd, that no Man is debarr'd of his just Priviledges by the Church of England, nor depriv'd of the due freedom of Conscience, if out of care of a good Man, and

6thly, There can be no better Proof of a Church's encouraging a free and impartial Enquiry after Truth, than when upon full Evidence and Conviction, she rectifies her Mistake, tho' of long continuance, reforms her self, and lays aside her Corruptions: Now our Church of England has given this Proof of her Sincerity. In the days of Popery, she made several strong Efforts to throw off that intollerable Yoke; some of the Romish Absurdities she shook off long before the Reformation, and was not altogether so corrupt, as the more bigotted Nations of Europe: At the Reformation she separated intirely, and purged her self from the Dross and Superstition of her former Faith. By this Rent from the Church of Rome, she again joined her self to the pure Primitive Church of the Cyprianick Age; but not long after was deluded and debated, over-run with grievous Errors, her Discipline and Ceremonies trod under foot, and the whole Constitution left in Partias, Sub-divisions, and an universal Desolation and Confusion: After this, upon the recovery of a better Mind, she reviv'd once more, washed her self clean, and returned

to her Primitive Innocence. Thus, the Church of England, by reforming so often already, has given sufficient Proofs that she will do so again, whenever she is convinc'd of being in the wrong; and therefore she calls upon all her Members to exert the utmost of their Judgment and Learning, to shew her when she Errs, and thereby to contribute towards making her as pure as 'tis possible for her to be, in a State of Trial and Frailty. And this is another remarkable Instance, how great a respect the Church of England has for the Trial and Examination of all things.

7thly, There are several of the first and divine Rights of our Church, in the exercise of which great regard is had to the Examination and Trial of private Persons. Thus, in the Ordination of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, the People are call'd upon to object against the Persons propos'd, and to join their Testimony to the Decree of the Church, in conferring those Dignities. So, again, in the Ceremony of Marriage, the People are at Liberty to declare every thing which they know to be an impediment in the Parties; and at the Holy Communion of the Lord's Supper, if they are scandaliz'd at the presence of any notorious Offender, they may publickly demand to have him repell'd, and rejected, if his Crime be such as he persists in, and such as the Church has adjudged to deserve that Punishment. So great a regard

be

has our Church for the Trial and Examination
of all things; that you set her without exercise
any of her most important and uncontroverted
Rights, without the Concurrence, Assistance,
and Approbation of all her Members.

To conclude, It has been the Glory of the
Church of England, to have many other Chur-
ches, differing from her in Doctrine, and Work-
shop, Witnesses of her Holiness, and Pro-
claimers of her Praises; (and perhaps, than
any one National Church beside can boast of,
so that she stands fairest for the Title of Uni-
versal, if the Universal Church meant to be
chosen by the Votes of all the National Chur-
ches: A Right that the Church of Rome has
often pleaded for in this case. Now these
Praises of our Church are owing to her Cle-
verness and good Opinion of others: She
does not deny Salvation to every Communion
but her own; and therefore when any pri-
vate Member quits her Walks, and goes over
to another Church, w^tho^t she punishes, yet
she does not presently pronounce him damned,
but is willing to believe, that he is persuaded
he is in the right; and therefore pursues him
with fresh Argument, entreaties, to recal
him, and upon his Conviction, makes his
remission easy; and the Terms moderate:
and this Treatment of Deserters by our Church,
is another Proof of her readiness to try, and
examine all things; and w^to inquire into all T

And truly, I hope, I have made it sufficient
to appear that the Church of England has,
among others, this mark of a true Church,
that it allows all bold every Member in her
Consuetudine, Mores, and usages, and try all
things, with that a bold fast than which is good.

I shall now proceed to shew, that this
Liberty of trying, trying and examining of all
things, has not been left by any other Sect, or
Church in the World, which set up for Rivals
or Adversaries to the Church of England, no vise.
The Quakers, being their great competitor,
is so far from allowing the Trial and Examina-
tion of things, that into neglects, no pains or
Power to tribe under suppose all Trial and
Examination whatsoever. Every one that
knows by thing of the Past, must confess,
that in the Education of their youth, they
confine them to their own little and Schemes
of Learning which are plausibly contriv'd to
make them as Parrots of 2 days/second Regent,
that in their minds they be the more easily
prepossess'd with monstrous Doctrines, as are
taught in their Schools, or taught in such
as Testimony to occulte Jargon of the Schools,
and those inveterate Idiots and Profoundities,
which is the only two mixt with Philosophy
and Divinity; so plausibly known learning
odious, nor at least so intrincate, as that their
own Absurdities might easily meet with
The holy Scriptures, which are the Rule of
Faith,

Faith, and which they themselves would to
 be the *one* Rule till the Council of Trent, where
 they keep to themselves, and forbid the Laity
 the use of them; whilst they mix so many
Legends and *Romantick Books* with the Writ-
 ings of the Primitive Fathers, that their Pattern
 of the ancient Church is quite lost, or at least
 rendered so obscure; that their pure uncorrupt
 State of the Church may serve as a Pattern
 for any the most corrupt Church upon Earth.
 Are not the Accounts which the Church of
 Rome gives of her own *Articles* and *Doctrines*,
 partial and deficient? And there not Sisters
 in her Religion which it is not thought conve-
 nient to communicate to the unthinking Laity?
 And is she not no less partial in her Accounts
 of other *Churches*? Are not Protestant Books
 forbid her People? And such monstrous Ha-
 tales invented and told of the Reformed, that
 their Aversion to us, (which ought to be
 founded on a Disagreement of Principles)
 is wrought up to a Personal Antipathy? The
 freedom of Controversy is entirely taken
 away; and the Laity are under a necessity of
 giving no other reason for their Faith, but the
Faith of the Church. Who from time to time,
 great and learned Men have complain'd of
 the Corruptions of that Church, have argued,
 disputed, and died in that Cause, yet instead
 of Reforming, every change they have made
 has been for the worse; their last Innovati-
 ons

onstante Constitutiones; being more more
severe than any of the former. As for their
Treaties with other Churches, this is well
knowne to be yest: Unchristian and Inhu-
mane. & They confesse Salvacion to their own
People, and look upon all without it as Regis-
trant, and in a syne of Damnation. For which
reason they saye even pardon those who go
over to the Protstant, and will hardly re-
ceive them upon their returne. Nay, there
are many Instances of their having burnt
several poor Wretches, even after they had
publickly recanted what they call Heresy.
In the Performance of their publick Worship,
and the Instituition of all their Sacraments, the
Lutherans entirely excluded from all their just
Rigours, which the Primitive Church allowed
them not. As for their Synods and Councils, they
are so farre from admiring a fair and impartial
Inquiry after Truth, and Examination of
Things, that they are wholly in a Slavish
Dependence to a pretended infallible Judge at
Rome, the Pope; and the Bishops; and Clergy,
who compose this Assembly, are but the ser-
vants sent to execute commands of his Sovereign
Will and Pleasure (with the Emperour) They have
so little regard for mans Conscience, that
they knowe not what the Repression meane
hath done so severelye all Dissentions, that
they pursue with Fire and Faggot all those
who in any point question their Power, or
oppose

Oppose their Innovations. Now by all these Instances does it not fully appear, that the Papists are so far from allowing a fair Trial of Things, or an Enquiry after Truth, that they on the other hand use all possible Endeavours to suppress and stifle it? Observe now this

Secondly, Let us now enquire into the Conduct of the Presbyterians in these Points, and we shall find that they are not much better than the Papists, if we may be allow'd to make any Conjecture at their Proceedings, by what they did and profess'd when they were in Power, and by what they still Practice where they are in Possession of any National Church. In the Education of the Laity, they have been extremely cautious and sparing; and whether it is because they are not overlearned themselves, or are at least willing to affect the want of Learning, they breed their Youth, generally speaking, to an Aversion for Philosophy and sound Reasoning; and in their room instead of all the Jargon and Garb of their Party, more dangerous, and if possible, more obscure than that of the Papists and Schoolmen; so that all their People are prepossessed and prejudiced to free and right thinking. No Persons indeed talk more of the Scriptures to their Congregations than they, but then they insist chiefly upon the mysterious and more obscure Parts of it; and in general, they choose rather to repeat, than explain. The Fathers and Church Historians

Historians they wholly except, and so deprive them
 their *Livity* of all publick Patterns of a Church but
 themselves. It is seldom, or never, that they
 will disclose the *Articles* of their Faith, or let
 the People know what they believe and pro-
 fess; and when they do, the Account is so
 ambiguous and imperfect, that the People
 cannot frame any just Notion or Idea, of
 what they call *their Church*. In their Accounts
 of other Churches, the *Presbyterians* are stran-
 gly uncharitable, apt to misrepresent them,
 and to bring against them a railing Accusation;
 calling themselves the only *Saints*, the only
 Beloved and Elect of God. Their Synods and
 Ecclesiastical Assemblies have carried the Inde-
 pendent Power much higher than the Papists,
 even to a plain *Usurpation of Temporal Power*;
 and in many Cases they have assumed Omni-
 potence it self, and undertaken to judge of the
 Sincerity of the Heart. None make a greater
 Clamour about *Calulation* than they do,
 when they are beholden to it; but where
 they are to give it, none profess a greater
 Aversion to it; witness the horrid *Anathema's*
 they pronounc'd against all they were pleas'd
 to stile *Dissenters*, when they were upper-
 most in the *Grand Rebellion*; How did they
 then declaim against the Sin of *Separation*?
 How black did they make it? Equalling it
 to the *Crucifixion* of our *Saviour*, since it was
 a tearing to pieces his *mystical Body*. As to
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all *Deserters* and *Forsakers* of their Communion, they are altogether implacable; and by many late and very common Instances, it plainly appears, that to go from one of their Teachers to another, has been accounted a *damnable Schism.*

Now by these Proofs, I think it is plain, that the *Presbyterians*, as well as the *Papists*, are far from allowing an *impartial Enquiry after Truth, and a free Trial and Examination of all Things*; and therefore cannot pretend to lay claim to that *mark of a true Church*, which is peculiar to the *Church of England*:

Thirdly, The *Independents*, notwithstanding their antient Enmity, do share with the *Presbyterians*, in many of the foregoing Severities: But suppose they did not, yet their very Constitution is at utter Defiance with a *fair Trial of Things*, and the Promotion of Truth. For where every *Congregation* is a *Church*, and all things belonging to that *Church*, are to be decided by a *Majority*, the Wisdom and Knowledge of a Few must be born down; and the Ignorance and Folly of the Multitude be establish'd into *Creeds* and *Articles*: Besides, what is *Truth* in one *Independent Congregation*, may be *Heresy* in another by this *Rule*; so that this *Religion* is a mere *Self-Contradiction*, and therefore at utter Enmity with *Free-thinking*, or an *impartial Enquiry after Truth*.

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Fourthly,

Fourthly, The Quakers come next ; and these are so far from approving the old regular and tedious Methods of acquiring Knowledge and Learning in Things sacred, whereby the Judgment may be qualified to discern aright, and to make a wise choice, that they have wholly thrown aside all Pretences to *humane Learning*, to make way for a shorter Method of attaining *divine Truths*. They have found out a nearer way, never discover'd before, by an immediate participation from what they call, *the Light*, *the Light within*. Through the help of this *Light* they pretend they stand in need of neither *Rule* nor *Pattern* to go by ; nor indeed of any other Helps for the attainment of *Truth*. Instead of *humane Learning*, the *Light* is their *Principle*, which the greatest Masters among them cannot conceive or understand, or give their Followers any Assurances, that they are moved and influenced by such a *Principle*. Mr. *Barclay* was the first of their Sect that ever pretended to give any fixt or intelligible Account of this *Light of the Quakers*, which he describes, as a *Substance* and not an *Accident*; *Born* in every Man ; and yet containing the whole *Trinity*, *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*. Now I desire it may here be consider'd, how 'tis possible to conceive or understand this *Principle* of the *Quakers*, which makes as many *Gods* as there are

Men,

Men, and moreover, confines the Godhead, which is infinite and fills all things: Nay, it makes the *Light* a much greater God than the *Trinity* it self; for say they, *the Light contains the whole Trinity*. These are certainly such Absurdities, as no rational Creature, upon the common Notions of *natural Religion*, can believe or digest.

Therefore, for the *Quakers* to impose so false and foolish a Principle as this, instead of the common Principles of *humane Learning*, is a worse blind upon the People than even the *absolute Authority* of the *Romish Church*. There is no sort of *Enthusiasm*, but may be imposed upon the World in the very same way, where no extraordinary Effects can be produced to prove it to be from *Heaven*: There is not in this Case, the least Pretence of a *Miracle*. Are their *Preachers* free from the common Frailties of Nature in the exercise of their *Function*? From *Contradictions*, *Tautologies*, and *Absurdities*? And is it not easy for any ordinary *Pretender* to the gift of speaking, who owns himself to be influenc'd by no higher Power than what is purely *Humane*, to imitate and exceed the Talents of the most gifted amongst these *Enthusiasts*? Where such a *Principle* as this prevails, Men are no longer under the Dominion of their own *Reason*, but are mere *Tools* and *Machines*, actuated and set a going by mere *Whimsy* and

Nonsense : So that upon this Supposition, Free-thinking is not onely taken away, but the very use of it would be Sinful and Abominable. Hence it is, that when any Member of this Sect ventures to examine his Faith by the ordinary Rule of right Reason, and thereupon deserts his Party, the Leaders of the Sect are implacable ; and upon their own Principles can never receive him again ; For, say they, *He had his Day, his time of Visitation, which he has out-sinned ; and after that, nothing remains, but a fearful Judgment and final Retribution.* If at any time you demand from one of this silly Tribe, a reason of the Faith that is in him, you ask upon a Principle that he does not acknowledge ; and therefore he presently works up himself into such a Ferment as proves the Descent of the Light into him, and he answers you in such prophetick, obscure Texts, or in such incoherent Terms of his own Party, as he neither will nor can explain, but by others, equally unintelligible ; so that you can never bring the Quavers to the form of an Argument, or to any the common Standards of right Reason. From all which, it is abundantly evident, how little regard this Sect pays to the Evidence of Reason, or the Enquiry after Truth.

The Deists, Free-thinkers, Hobbits, Latitudinarians, and Libertines, these all herd together, unite in the same Interest, and make

one

one entire Community ; and therefore I shall consider them in a body. They pretend to carry Free-thinking much higher than others do, and to make this the *distinguishing Mark of their Party* : But these Men by making the Authority of Free-thinking absolute and unlimited, do utterly destroy and confound it : For it is impossible to judge aright without a Rule to judge by ; and it is these Mens chief employ to represent all those as Slaves and Vassals, who subject themselves to any ; and yet none are more studious, or more at a loss than themselves, to find out one upon which to found their *Doctrines*. Sometimes they begin their Scheme with an *imaginary State of Nature*, that never did or could subsist in the World ; sometimes they would make *Nature* their onely God, and at other times resolve every thing into their great Principle *Matter*. It has often been debated amongst these Men, whether they should allow the same Credit to the *Scriptures*, as to other *antient Histories*, and *Pagan Writers*, or admit *Religion* as a *Moral or Political Scheme* ; for they will not allow it to be *Divine*. Nor are they less divided about the *Ends of living and acting* ; whether they should resolve all *humane Life* into *sensual or intellectual Pleasure*. So that for want of a *Rule*, and because they could never yet agree upon a *Set of Principles*, they leaye their Followers in perfect

perfect Ignorance, so that they cannot know them, or their Religion, what it is, or whether any, or which way to be of it, unless by this one general Maxim, *always to think as they please*: a State that debases *human Nature* below *Brutes*, who have the Rule of *Instinct* for the Guidance of their *Animal Life*. Endless Controversy that can never be determin'd for want of first Principles, is the direct Consequence of such a Persuasion: And this is so far from being *an impartial Search after Truth*, that it is *Labour in vain*; for it is searching after that which can never be found, because by the Principle of this Profession, Men must always be searching, which is a questioning if not denying the very Being of *Truth*. And hence it appears, that these Men too, by allowing an absolute, unlimited, ^{is} *Free-thinking*, do entirely confound and destroy it.

Now from this Parallel I have drawn, we may easily judge how much the *Church of England* has the advantage over all the other *Churches* and *Sects*, that set up to rival her in her *Candor* and *Clemency*, by encouraging *Free-thinking*, in the most diligent and impartial search after *Truth*: And this must for ever Silence, and render inexcusable, all our *Dissenters* and *Domestick Hereticks*, who found their *Departure* from our *Establish'd Church* upon this very Principle

ple of Free-thinking; and yet when they have left our Communion, are more against Free-thinking, than the very Church from whose Communion they divide themselves.

This Consideration therefore, of the Regard the Church of England has for Free-thinking, should, one would think, if duly weigh'd, be sufficient to preserve the unity of her Communion, and restore all those lapsed Members who dissent and go out from her. To what other Church can they resort, where they can enjoy their own Reason more freely, so far as that Freedom conduces to the Advancement of Truth ? And after this, what other Reason can any Man give for departing from so impartial, and so well constituted a Church, but onely to enjoy the freedom of being in the wrong, and the hazard of entertaining many destructive and pernicious Errors ?

Whilst Men retain the Rule and the Pattern ; (and it is as much their Interest and Glory to retain these, as it is the Interest and Glory of any other Order of Creatures to keep within the bounds which their Creator has set them) and whilst they value the use of their own Reason, and would preserve it clear and impartial, they ought stedfastly to adhere to that Church where this Reason is most improveable, and the Rule and the Pattern preserv'd in the greatest Purity. How can

can Men choose to separate from such a Church, unless they believe that Unity is an Publick Evil, and Destructive of the Rights of humane Nature?

To conclude, There is nothing more wanting to reconcile all Men to the Church of England, but thoroughly to know and understand how Pure, how Perfect, and how Truly Christian she is; how great a Friend to the better and incorrupt Part of humane Nature, and how agreeable to the strict Principles of right Reason. If the pure & genuine Rule of holy Scripture, if the true primitive Pattern of the Apostles and their Successors; and the best Improved Reason of Mankind, be sufficient to arm a Church with Authority, the Church of England, which is so industrious to preserve all these in their greatest Perfection, has the best Title to it of any Church in the World; and therefore all her Members, out of Gratitude to so kind a Mother, ought to employ all their Powers in defence of her Rights, and in vindication of her Dignity; and heartily pray, that her Dominion may be from the One Sea to the Other, and from the Flood unto the World's End; and so become the Joy of the whole Earth. Amen.

